

New American Bible
Revised Edition

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The Catholic
Family Connections
Bible

PRAY IT
STUDY IT
LIVE IT®



The Catholic Family Connections Bible

Pray It! Study It! Live It!®
resources offer a holistic approach
to learning, living, and passing on the
Catholic faith.

For the text of the articles and introductions

Nihil Obstat: Rev. William M. Becker, S.T.D.
Censor Librorum
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Bishop of Winona
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For the text of the *New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE)*

RESCRIPT

In accord with canon 825 §1 of the Code of Canon Law, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops hereby approves for publication The New American Bible, Revised Old Testament, a translation of the Sacred Scriptures authorized by the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc.

The translation was approved by the Administrative Committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in November 2008 and September 2010. It is permitted by the undersigned for private use and study.

Given in the city of Washington, the District of Columbia, on the Feast of Saint Jerome, Priest and Doctor of the Church, the 30th day of September, in the year of our Lord 2010.

† Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.
Archbishop of Chicago
President, USCCB

The Revised New Testament

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The Catholic Family Connections Bible

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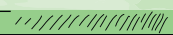
TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGES
WITH CRITICAL USE OF ALL THE ANCIENT SOURCES

AUTHORIZED BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE
CONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE
AND APPROVED BY THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE
OF THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS



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Welcome!

The Catholic Family Connections Bible is just for you!

This Bible is a true companion for your family and your Catholic faith practice. Studies among Christians in general and Catholics in particular show that parents and families play a crucial role in the faith formation and development of their children. Certain activities and practices engaged in at home in a family setting are critical to the faith development of young people.

In their book *The Search for Common Ground: What Unites and Divides Catholic Americans*, James D. Davidson and his colleagues acknowledge that family religious practice is a key predictor of a young person's adult faith practice. The factor with the most impact on adult Catholics' religious beliefs and practices is *childhood religiosity* that is nurtured in the family and by parish or school religious education.

A Search Institute study found that the most important factors that empower faith maturity among young people are family based. Faith maturity is a young person's ability to say yes to his or her beliefs, own them, and act on them by his or her own choice.

This is why we developed *The Catholic Family Connections Bible*, just for you! This Bible will be your family's Catholic faith-practice companion in three special ways:

- ***Building family faith conversations.*** Hearing their parents' faith stories is one of the most important influences on the faith of children and teenagers. It is just as important for parents to create opportunities for their children to talk about their own growing sense of faith. It is especially powerful when parents and children can talk about the role of their faith in difficult times, times of pain and suffering, as well as in times of joy and celebration.

This is why you will find so many tools and activities throughout this Bible to help you have wonderful family faith conversations. The special insert section "Family Activities to Learn the ABCs of the Bible" (pages C17–C24) provides engaging ways to involve the whole family in talking about the Bible and growing in an understanding of the Bible as communicating the love story of God's family—the love story of God's family and yours.

You will find the set of insert pages titled “Family Faith Conversations” (pages C25–C32) of special help by offering Bible passages related to many of life’s real issues and issues of faith that you and your family can read about and discuss.

- ***Growing family ritual and devotion.*** Families who regularly engage in devotions, prayer, or Bible reading at home tend to have deeper faith maturity. That is why you will find one whole section of insert pages, “Praying with the Bible” (pages C9–C16), dedicated to guiding you in praying with the Bible as a family. This special section includes guidance on how to pray using lectio divina, one of the Church’s most ancient forms of praying with the Bible. This section also provides step-by-step guidance in how to teach your family to pray the Rosary and ways to learn how to memorize Bible passages. Additional resources to enrich your family prayers and Scripture readings include a table listing the Church’s Sunday Mass readings for the entire year (pages 1838–1842), so you can prepare for each upcoming Sunday’s readings, and a summary of the seasons of the liturgical year and their importance and meaning (pages 1836–1837).
- ***Doing family outreach and service.*** A particularly powerful influence on faith and family unity is working together to help others. God seeks a relationship with every family. Therefore, families are called to respond to God’s graciousness. That is why the many articles and aids in this Bible will help you grow in and deepen your knowledge of God’s love, and guide you in responding to God’s love in service as a family. You will find many ideas and activities, especially in the special insert section on pages C25–C32, that can aid your family in becoming involved in serving others.

The Catholic Family Connections Bible has one ultimate aim: to help Catholic families in achieving the pastoral principle of the earlier *Roman Catechism* that reminds us of the goal of all catechesis:

The whole concern of doctrine and its teaching must be directed to the love that never ends. Whether something is proposed for belief, for hope or for action, the love of our Lord must always be made accessible, so that anyone can see that all the works of perfect Christian virtue spring from love and have no other objective than to arrive at love. (Preface, 10; cf. 1 Cor 13:8)

May your family find joy and peace as you pray, study, and live the Good News you will discover in ***The Catholic Family Connections Bible***, through God’s abiding grace and love.

Special Features

The Catholic Family Connections Bible is loaded with special features to help make it easier for you to read and understand the Bible. Here is a list of some of those features and where to find them.

SECTION INTRODUCTIONS

Each major section of the Bible (the Pentateuch, the historical books, the biblical novellas, the wisdom books, the prophetic books, the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, and the Letters and Revelation) begins with background on the books in that section.

BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions at the beginning of most books (sometimes two or three books share a single introduction) give insight into each book's central message and an overview of its contents.

COLOR INSERTS

The five sections of color inserts cover how to read and study the Bible; how to pray with the Scriptures; how to learn about the Bible through family activities; how to have family faith conversations; and an overview of Catholic practices and prayers.

Live It!

The **“Live It!”** articles apply the Bible's messages to situations you may be facing now or will face in the future.

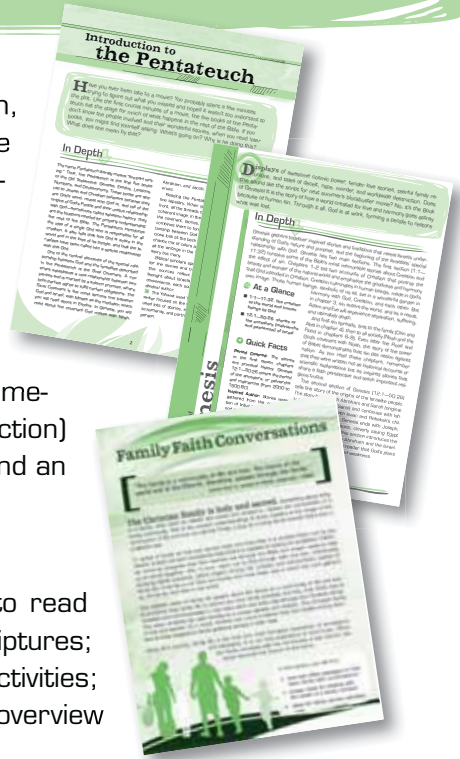
Pray It!

The **“Pray It!”** articles can help you use the Bible for personal prayer. They show the biblical basis for the prayer and sacramental life of the Catholic Church.



Did You Know?

The **“Did You Know?”** articles provide background from biblical scholars to help you understand the culture and traditions of biblical times, or the Church's interpretation of certain passages.





Introducing...

The “**Introducing . . .**” articles give a quick introduction to the lives of important biblical people.

Catholic Connection

The “**Catholic Connection**” articles are full-page articles that show the biblical basis for many Catholic Christian beliefs and practices.

Cultural Connection

The “**Cultural Connection**” articles explain how people in different cultures have understood and lived out God’s revelation in the Bible. The articles represent many of the diverse cultures that have found their home in the United States.

Catholic Social Teaching

These articles focus on the seven principles of Catholic social teaching and help the reader to understand their biblical basis.



WHERE DO I FIND IT?

Several indexes are located at the back of the Bible. The first index helps you locate Bible passages on events, people, and teachings of Jesus. The second index helps you find Bible passages related to Catholic teaching. The third index helps you find Bible passages related to each sacrament. The fourth index helps you find articles on the seven themes of Catholic social teaching. The fifth index helps you find Bible passages related to life and faith issues. The sixth index leads you to articles on specific topics.

STUDY AIDS

A calendar of the Church year and Sunday readings, a glossary of Scripture-related terms, color maps, pictures, and a timeline are found at the back of the Bible. The timeline and maps will help you locate where and when different biblical events occurred.



The Bible Is Multicultural

The Bible developed in the midst of great cultural diversity. In fact, the Bible was originally written in at least two languages, Hebrew and Greek. The people of the Old Testament were influenced by Arabic, Egyptian, and other Middle Eastern cultures that surrounded them. Later, they and the early Christian church were influenced by the Greek and Roman cultures. In the Bible, God is revealed as the God of all nations and all cultures.

As the word of God, the Bible's core message of God's love for human beings speaks to people of any culture. That is one reason the Bible has been translated into more languages than any other book in the world. Christians also believe that God is at work in the lives of people of every culture, whether or not they have been formally introduced to the Christian message. Listening to other cultures' experience of God can deepen Christian people's appreciation of God's message present in the Bible.

We also live in a multicultural world. ***The Catholic Family Connections Bible*** responds to this reality in two main ways. First, all the articles attempt to speak in a way that people of all cultures can appreciate and understand. Second, some articles have been specially written to represent distinct cultural perspectives. Most of these articles represent African American, Asian American, Hispanic and Latino, and Native American perspectives. ***The Catholic Family Connections Bible*** also includes additional articles representing cultural perspectives from around the world.

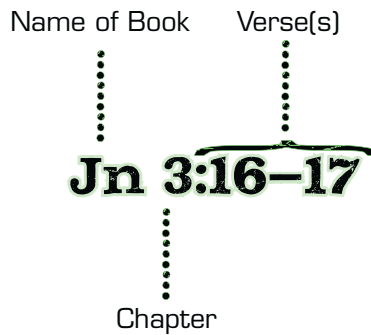
All the articles share cultural experiences and traditions, religious symbols, prayers, and poetry, and they connect all these elements to the Bible. If you would like to read articles from one of the four major cultural perspectives mentioned above, the subject index contains entries for those.

The cultural perspectives represented in ***The Catholic Family Connections Bible*** are a small sampling of the many unique cultures in the world. Because of space restrictions, articles on many cultures could not be included. Despite these limitations, the multicultural articles can deepen your appreciation of the Bible's message and of the rich ways different cultures live that message.

Navigating *The Catholic Family Connections Bible*

The Catholic Family Connections Bible has several aids to help you locate references to Bible books and the Bible's special features. The contents on pages 4–5 will be your main guide in locating the different books and features. However, the last page in the color section (facing the back cover) lists all the Bible books alphabetically and gives their abbreviations and beginning page numbers. You will find this a useful and easy-to-locate guide. Also, the section “Where Do I Find It?” offers several types of indexes to help you locate specific passages and articles.

Throughout *The Catholic Family Connections Bible*, there are many references to specific Bible passages. These references are given in shorthand form, such as Jn 3:16–17. The initial letters are the abbreviation for (or, in a few cases, the full name of) the Bible book. The number before the colon stands for the chapter, and the number(s) after the colon stands for the verse(s). So Jn 3:16–17 refers to the Gospel According to John, chapter 3, verses 16 to 17.



Most of the articles end with a citation identifying the Bible passage the article is based on. It is important to read the passage before reading the article.

In addition to the Bible text, you will find footnotes and Scripture cross-references printed along the bottom of each page. Every time you see an obelisk (†) in the Bible text, you will find a corresponding footnote labeled with the same chapter and verse numbers at the bottom of the page. The footnotes provide you with added information about words and phrases mentioned in the Bible. Every time you see an asterisk (*) in the Bible text, you will find a corresponding cross-reference labeled with the same chapter and verse numbers at the bottom of the page. The cross-references direct you to similar Scripture passages.

Preface to the New American Bible

The Old Testament

On September 30, 1943, His Holiness Pope Pius XII issued his now famous encyclical on scripture studies, *Divino afflante Spiritu*. He wrote: "We ought to explain the original text which was written by the inspired author himself and has more authority and greater weight than any, even the very best, translation whether ancient or modern. This can be done all the more easily and fruitfully if to the knowledge of languages be joined a real skill in literary criticism of the same text."

Early in 1944, in conformity with the spirit of the encyclical, and with the encouragement of Archbishop Cicognani, Apostolic Delegate to the United States, the Bishops' Committee of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine requested members of The Catholic Biblical Association of America to translate the sacred scriptures from the original languages or from the oldest extant form of the text, and to present the sense of the biblical text in as correct a form as possible.

The first English Catholic version of the Bible, the Douay-Rheims (1582-1609/10), and its revision by Bishop Challoner (1750) were based on the Latin Vulgate. In view of the relative certainties more recently attained by textual and higher criticism, it has become increasingly desirable that contemporary translations of the sacred books into English be prepared in which due reverence for the text and strict observance of the rules of criticism would be combined.

The New American Bible has accomplished this in response to the need of the church in America today. It is the achievement of some fifty biblical scholars, the greater number of whom, though not all, are Catholics. In particular, the editors-in-chief have devoted twenty-five years to this work. The collaboration of scholars who are not Catholic fulfills the directive of the Second Vatican Council, not only that "correct translations be made into different languages especially from the original texts

of the sacred books," but that, "with the approval of the church authority, these translations be produced in cooperation with separated brothers" so that "all Christians may be able to use them."

The text of the books contained in *The New American Bible* is a completely new translation throughout. From the original and the oldest available texts of the sacred books, it aims to convey as directly as possible the thought and individual style of the inspired writers. The better understanding of Hebrew and Greek, and the steady development of the science of textual criticism, the fruit of patient study since the time of St. Jerome, have allowed the translators and editors in their use of all available materials to approach more closely than ever before the sense of what the sacred authors actually wrote.

Where the translation supposes the received text—Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek, as the case may be—ordinarily contained in the best-known editions, as the original or the oldest extant form, no additional remarks are necessary. But for those who are happily able to study the original text of the scriptures at firsthand, a supplementary series of textual notes pertaining to the Old Testament was added originally in an appendix to the typical edition. (It is now obtainable in a separate booklet from The Catholic Biblical Association of America, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC 20064.) These notes furnish a guide in those cases in which the editorial board judges that the manuscripts in the original languages, or the evidence of the ancient versions, or some similar source, furnish the correct reading of a passage, or at least a reading more true to the original than that customarily printed in the available editions.

The Massoretic text of 1 and 2 Samuel has in numerous instances been corrected by the more ancient manuscripts Samuel a, b, and c from Cave 4 of Qumran, with the aid of important evidence

Preface to the New American Bible: The Old Testament

from the Septuagint in both its oldest form and its Lucianic recension. Fragments of the lost Book of Tobit in Aramaic and in Hebrew, recovered from Cave 4 of Qumran, are in substantial agreement with the Sinaitic Greek recension used for the translation of this book. The lost original Hebrew text of 1 Maccabees is replaced by its oldest extant form in Greek. Judith, 2 Maccabees, and parts of Esther are also translated from the Greek.

The basic text for the Psalms is not the Massoretic but one which the editors considered closer to the original inspired form, namely the Hebrew text underlying the new Latin Psalter of the Church, the *Liber Psalmorum* (1944¹, 1945²). Nevertheless they retained full liberty to establish the reading of the original text on sound critical principles.

The translation of Sirach, based on the original Hebrew as far as it is preserved and corrected from the ancient versions, is often interpreted in the light of the traditional Greek text. In the Book of Baruch the basic text is the Greek of the Septuagint, with some readings derived from an underlying Hebrew form no longer extant. In the deuterocanonical sections of Daniel (3:24–91, chapter 13 and chapter 14 [these are Azariah, Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon respectively in WORDsearch]), the basic text is the Greek text of Theodotion, occasionally revised according to the Greek text of the Septuagint.

In some instances in the Book of Job, in Proverbs, Sirach, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zechariah there is good reason to believe that the original order of lines was accidentally disturbed in the transmission of the text. The verse numbers given in such cases are always those of the current Hebrew text, though the arrangement differs. In these instances the textual notes advise the reader of the difficulty. Cases of exceptional dislocation are called to the reader's attention by footnotes.

The Books of *Genesis to Ruth* were first published in 1952; the Wisdom Books, *Job to Sirach*, in 1955; the Prophetic Books, *Isaiah to Malachi*, in 1961; and the Historical Books, *Samuel to Maccabees*, in 1969. In the present edition of *Genesis to Ruth* there are certain new features: a general introduction to the Pentateuch, a retranslation of the text of Genesis with an introduction, cross-references, and revised textual notes, besides new and expanded exegetical notes which

take into consideration the various sources or literary traditions.

The revision of *Job to Sirach* includes changes in strophe division in Job and Proverbs and in titles of principal parts and sections of Wisdom and Ecclesiastes. Corrections in the text of Sirach are made in Sir 39:27–44:17 on the basis of the Masada text, and in 51:13–30 on the basis of the occurrence of this canticle in the Psalms scroll from Qumran Cave 11. In this typical edition, new corrections are reflected in the textual notes of Job, Proverbs, Wisdom, and Sirach. In the Psalms, the enumeration found in the Hebrew text is followed instead of the double enumeration, according to both the Hebrew and the Latin Vulgate texts, contained in the previous edition of this book.

In the Prophetic Books *Isaiah to Malachi*, only minor revisions have been made in the structure and wording of the texts, and in the textual notes.

The spelling of proper names in *The New American Bible* follows the customary forms found in most English Bibles since the Authorized Version.

The work of translating the Bible has been characterized as "the sacred and apostolic work of interpreting the word of God and of presenting it to the laity in translations as clear as the difficulty of the matter and the limitations of human knowledge permit" (A. G. Cicognani, Apostolic Delegate, in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 6, [1944], 389–90). In the appraisal of the present work, it is hoped that the words of the encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu* will serve as a guide: "Let all the sons of the church bear in mind that the efforts of these resolute laborers in the vineyard of the Lord should be judged not only with equity and justice but also with the greatest charity; all moreover should abhor that intemperate zeal which imagines that whatever is new should for that very reason be opposed or suspected."

Conscious of their personal limitations for the task thus defined, those who have prepared this text cannot expect that it will be considered perfect; but they can hope that it may deepen in its readers "the right understanding of the divinely given Scriptures," and awaken in them "that piety by which it behooves us to be grateful to the God of all providence, who from the throne of his majesty has sent these books as so many personal letters to his own children" (*Divino afflante Spiritu*).

Preface to the New American Bible Revised Old Testament

The first step in the genesis of *The New American Bible* was taken in 1936 when His Excellency, the Most Reverend Edwin V. O'Hara, D.D., chairman of the Episcopal Committee of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, invited a group of Catholic Scripture scholars to plan for a revised edition of the Challoner-Rheims New Testament, primarily on the basis of the Vulgate; the plans soon expanded to include the revision of the Old Testament. Archbishop O'Hara's initiative resulted in the formation of the Catholic Biblical Association, whose principal activity in its early years was this work of revision and translation. (For information on the work done on the New Testament, see the "Preface to *The New American Bible: First Edition of the New Testament*" and "Preface to the Revised Edition.") In 1943 His Holiness Pope Pius XII issued the encyclical *Divino afflante spiritu*, which encouraged Scripture scholars to translate the Scriptures from the original languages. He wrote: "We ought to explain the original text which was written by the inspired author himself and has more authority and greater weight than any, even the very best, translation whether ancient or modern. This can be done all the more easily and fruitfully if to the knowledge of languages be joined a real skill in literary criticism of the same text." Although at this point work on almost twenty of the Old Testament books was completed or near completion, that work was abandoned and the new project of translating from the Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic was undertaken.

The completed books of the Old Testament were initially published, as they became available, in four volumes: Genesis–Ruth (1952), Job–Sirach (1955), Isaiah–Malachi (1961), and Samuel–Maccabees (1969). Some fifty scholars collaborated on this project; these were mainly Catholics, but, in accord with the suggestion of Vatican II that "with the approval of the church authority, these translations be produced in cooperation with sepa-

rated brothers" so that "all Christians may be able to use them" (*Dei Verbum*, No. 22), non-Catholics also participated in the work. To this point the translation had been known under the name of the "Confraternity of Christian Doctrine" or CCD for short, but when these parts of the Old Testament were combined with the New Testament in a single volume, it was given the name "New American Bible," in part to reflect its ecumenical character. In producing the new volume certain changes were made from the original four volumes: a retranslation of the Book of Genesis, cross-references, new and expanded exegetical notes.

New translations and revision of existing translations are required from time to time for various reasons. For example, it is important to keep pace with the discovery and publication of new and better ancient manuscripts (e.g., the Dead Sea scrolls) so that the best possible textual tradition will be followed, as required by *Divino afflante spiritu*. There are advances in linguistics of the biblical languages which make possible a better understanding and more accurate translation of the original languages. And there are changes and developments in vocabulary and the cultural background of the receptor language. An obvious example of this is the abandonment in English of the second person singular (use of "thee," "thou," "sayest," "hearest"), which had a major impact on Bible translations. Other changes are less obvious but are nevertheless present. There have been changes in vocabulary; for example, the term "holocaust" is now normally reserved for the sacrilegious attempt to destroy the Jewish people by the Third Reich. Concerns such as these are reflected in what Pope John Paul II spoke of as the "three pillars" of good biblical translation: "A good translation is based on three pillars that must contemporaneously support the entire work. First, there must be a deep knowledge of the language and the cultural world

Preface to the New American Bible: Revised Old Testament

at the point of origin. Next, there must be a good familiarity with the language and cultural context at the point where the work will arrive. Lastly, to crown the work with success, there must be an adequate mastery of the contents and meaning of what one is translating”—and he praised the translation that “utilizes the vocabulary and idioms of everyday speech” (“le parole e le forme della lingua di tutti i giorni”). (From an address to the United Bible Societies, November 26, 2001.)

This new edition is a thorough revision of the already excellent *New American Bible* Old Testament of 1970. Work on most books of the Old Testament, begun in 1994 and completed in 2001, was done by forty revisers and a board of eight editors. The 1991 revision of the Psalter, the work of thirty revisers and six editors, was further revised by seven revisers and two editors between 2009 and 2010. As suggested in the comments above, the revision aimed at making use of the best manuscript traditions available (see below), translating as accurately as possible, and rendering the result in good contemporary English. In many ways it is a more literal translation than the original NAB and has attempted to be more consistent in rendering Hebrew (or Greek) words and idioms, especially in technical contexts, such as regulations for sacrifices. In translating the Psalter special effort was made to provide a smooth, rhythmic translation for easy singing or recitation, and to retain the concrete imagery of the Hebrew.

Where the Old Testament translation supposes the received text—Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek, as the case may be—ordinarily contained in the best-known editions, as the original or the oldest

extant form, no additional remarks are necessary. Where the translators have departed from those received texts, e.g., by following the Septuagint rather than the Masoretic text, accepting a reading of what is judged to be a better textual tradition, as from a Qumran manuscript, or by emending a reading apparently corrupted in transmission, such changes are recorded in the revised edition of the *Textual Notes on The New American Bible*. Additional information on the textual tradition for some books may be found in the introduction to the book in the same *Textual Notes*.

In particular, important manuscripts from Cave 4 of Qumran, as well as the most useful recensions of the Septuagint, have been consulted in the preparation of 1 and 2 Samuel. Fragments of the lost Book of Tobit in Aramaic and in Hebrew, recovered from Cave 4 of Qumran, are in substantial agreement with the Sinaiticus Greek recension used for the translation of this book. The lost original Hebrew text of 1 Maccabees is replaced by its oldest extant form in Greek. Judith, 2 Maccabees, and parts of Esther are also translated from the Greek. The translation of The Wisdom of Ben Sira is based on the original Hebrew as far as it is preserved, with corrections from the ancient versions; otherwise, the Greek of the Septuagint is followed. In the Book of Baruch the basic text is the Greek of the Septuagint, with some readings derived from an underlying Hebrew form no longer extant. In the deuterocanonical sections of Daniel (3:24–90; 13:1–14:42), the basic text is the Greek text of so-called Theodotion, occasionally revised according to the Greek text of the Septuagint.



The Old Testament



In the
Beginning

Introduction to the Pentateuch

The Pentateuch (Greek for “five books”) designates the first five books of the Jewish and Christian Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). Jewish tradition calls the five books Torah (Teaching, Law) because of the centrality of the Sinai covenant and legislation mediated through Moses.

The unity of the Pentateuch comes from the single story it tells. God creates the world and destines human beings for the blessings of progeny and land possession (Gn 1–3). As the human race expands, its evil conduct provokes God to send the flood to wipe out all but righteous Noah’s family. After the flood, the world is repopulated from his three sons, Ham, Shem, and Japheth (Gn 4–9). From them are descended the seventy nations of the civilized world whose offense this time (building a city rather than taking their assigned lands, Gn 10–11) provokes God to elect one family from the rest. Abraham and his wife, Sarah, landless and childless, are promised a child and the land of Canaan. Amid trials and fresh promises, a son (Isaac) is born to them and Abraham takes title to a sliver of Canaanite land, a kind of down payment for later possession (Gn 12–25). Gn 25–36 tells how their descendant Jacob becomes the father of twelve sons (because of which he is called “Israel”), and Gn 37–50 tells how the rejected brother Joseph saves the family from famine and brings them to Egypt.

In Egypt, a pharaoh who knew not Joseph subjects “the seventy sons of Jacob” (“the Hebrews”) to hard labor, keeping them from their land and destroying their male progeny (Ex 1). Moses is commissioned to lead the people out of Egypt to their own land (Ex 2–6). In ten plagues, the Lord defeats Pharaoh. Free at last, the Hebrews leave Egypt and journey to Mount Sinai (Ex 7–18), where they enter into a covenant to be the people of the Lord and be shaped by the Ten Commandments and other laws (Ex 19–24). Though the people commit apostasy when Moses goes back to the mountain for the plans of the dwelling (tabernacle), Moses’ intercession prevents the abrogation of the covenant by God (Ex 32–34). A principle has been established, however: even the people’s apostasy need not end their relationship with God. The book ends with the

cloud and the glory taking possession of the tent of meeting (Ex 36:34–38). “The sons of Israel” in Ex 1:1 are the actual sons of Jacob/Israel the patriarch, but at the end of the book they are the nation Israel, for all the elements of nationhood in antiquity have been granted: a god (and temple), a leader, a land, and an authoritative tradition.

Israel remains at the holy mountain for almost a year. The entire block of material from Ex 19:1 to Nm 10:11 is situated at Sinai. The rituals of Leviticus and Numbers are delivered to Moses at the holy mountain, showing that Israel’s worship was instituted by God and part of the very fabric of the people’s life. Priestly material in the Book of Exodus (chaps. 25–31, 35–40) describes the basic institutions of Israelite worship (the tabernacle, its furniture, and priestly vestments). Leviticus, aptly called in rabbinic tradition the Priests’ Manual, lays down the role of priests to teach Israel the distinction between clean and unclean and to see to their holiness. In Nm 10:11–22:1, the journey is resumed, this time from Sinai through the wilderness to Transjordan; Nm 22:2–36:13 tells of events and laws in the plains of Moab.

The final book of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy, consists of four speeches by Moses to the people who have arrived at the plains of Moab, ready to conquer the land: 1:1–4:43; 4:44–28:68; 29:1–32:52; 33:1–34:12. Each speech is introduced by the formula “This is the law/words/blessing.”

The Priestly editor used literary formulas. The formula “These are the generations (the wording can vary) of . . .” occurs five times in the primordial history (Gn 2:4a; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10) and five times in the ancestral history (11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1 [v. 9 is secondary]; 37:2). In Exodus and Numbers the formula (with slight variations) “They departed from (place name) and encamped at (place name)” occurs in two groups of six: A. Ex 12:37a; 13:20; 14:1–2; 15:22a; 16:1; 17:1a; and B. 19:2; Nm 10:12; 20:1a; 20:22; 21:10–11; 22:1.

Who wrote the Pentateuch, and when? Up to the seventeenth century, the virtually unanimous answer of Jews and Christians was “Moses.” Moses wrote the Pentateuch as David wrote the

Psalter and Solomon wrote the wisdom literature. Though scholars had noted inconsistencies (compare Ishmael's age in Gn 16:16 and 21:5, 14) and duplications (Gn 12, 20, and 26), they assumed Mosaic authorship because of the prevalent theory of inspiration: God inspired authors while they wrote. With the rise of historical criticism, scholars began to use the doublets and inconsistencies as clues to different authors and traditions.

By the late nineteenth century, one theory of the sources of the Pentateuch had been worked out that proved acceptable in its main lines to the majority of scholars (apart from Christian and Jewish conservatives) then and now. It can be quickly sketched. In the premonarchic period of the Judges (ca. 1220–1020 B.C.), the twelve tribes had an oral form of their story from creation to the taking of the land. With the beginnings of monarchy in the late eleventh and tenth centuries, the oral material was written down, being known as the Yahwist account (from its use of the divine name Yhwh). Its abbreviation, "J," comes from the German spelling of the divine name. In the following century, another account took shape in the Northern Kingdom (called E after its use of Elohim as a divine name); some believe the E source is simply a supplement to J. After the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722/721 B.C., the E version was taken to Jerusalem where it was combined with the J version to produce J-E. During the exile (conventionally dated 587–539 B.C.) or thereafter, an editor recast J-E to make it relevant for the exiled population. This editor is conventionally known as P (=Priestly) because of the chronological and ritual interests apparent in the work. P can also designate archival material and chronological notices. The audience for the Priestly edition no longer lived in the land and was deeply concerned about its survival and its claim on the land.

Deuteronomy (=D) stands alone in style, genre (preaching rather than narrative), and content. How did it come to be the fifth book of the Pentateuch? The J-E narrative actually ends in Numbers, when Israel arrives at the plains of Moab. Many scholars believe that Deuteronomy was secondarily attached to Numbers by moving the account of Moses' death from its original place in the J-E version in Numbers to the end of Deuteronomy (chap. 34). Deuteronomy was attached to Genesis–Numbers to link it to another great work, the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua to Kings). Deuteronomy is now the fifth book of the Pentateuch and the first book of the Deuteronomistic History.

In the last three decades, the above consensus on the composition of the Pentateuch has come

under attack. Some critics are extremely skeptical about the historical value of the so-called early traditions, and a few doubt there ever was a preexilic monarchy of any substance. For such scholars, the Pentateuch is a retrojection from the fourth or third centuries B.C. Other scholars postulate a different sequence of sources, or understand the sources differently.

How should a modern religiously minded person read the Pentateuch? First, readers have before them the most significant thing, the text of the Pentateuch. It is accurately preserved, reasonably well understood, and capable of touching audiences of every age. Take and read! Second, the controversies are about the sources of the Pentateuch, especially their antiquity and character. Many details will never be known, for the evidence is scanty. Indeed, the origin of many great literary works is obscure.

The Pentateuch witnesses to a coherent story that begins with the creation of the world and ends with Israel taking its land. The same story is in the historical Ps 44, 77, 78, 80, 105, 114, and 149, and in the confessions Dt 26:5–9, Jos 24:2–13, and 1 Sm 12:7–13. Though the narrative enralls and entertains, as all great literature does, it is well to remember that it is a theopolitical charter as well, meant to establish how and why descendants of the patriarchs are a uniquely holy people among the world's nations.

The destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and deportation of Israelites in the sixth century B.C. seemed to invalidate the charter, for Israel no longer possessed its land in any real sense. The last chapter of the ancient narrative—Israel dwelling securely in its land—no longer held true. The story had to be reinterpreted, and the Priestly editor is often credited with doing so. A preface (Gn 1) was added, emphasizing God's intent that human beings continue in existence through their progeny and possess their own land. Good news, surely, to a devastated people wondering whether they would survive and repossess their ancestral land. The ending of the old story was changed to depict Israel at the threshold of the promised land (the plains of Moab) rather than in it. Henceforth, Israel would be a people oriented toward the land rather than possessing it. The revised ending could not be more suitable for Jews and Christians alike. Both peoples can imagine themselves on the threshold of the promised land, listening to the word of God in order to be able to enter it in the future. For Christians particularly, the Pentateuch portrays the pilgrim people waiting for the full realization of the kingdom of God.

The New American Bible, Revised Edition

Introduction to Genesis

Genesis is the first book of the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), the first section of the Jewish and the Christian Scriptures. Its title in English, "Genesis," comes from the Greek of Gn 2:4, literally, "the book of the generation (*genesis*) of the heavens and earth." Its title in the Jewish Scriptures is the opening Hebrew word, *Bereshit*, "in the beginning."

The book has two major sections—the creation and expansion of the human race (2:4–11:9), and the story of Abraham and his descendants (11:10–50:26). The first section deals with God and the nations, and the second deals with God and a particular nation, Israel. The opening creation account (1:1–2:3) lifts up two themes that play major roles in each section—the divine command to the first couple (standing for the whole race) to produce offspring and to possess land (1:28). In the first section, progeny and land appear in the form of births and genealogies (chaps. 2–9) and allotment of land (chaps. 10–11), and in the second, progeny and land appear in the form of promises of descendants and land to the ancestors. Another indication of editing is the formulaic introduction, "this is the story; these are the descendants" (Hebrew *tôledôt*), which occurs five times in Section I (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 10:31) and five times in Section II (11:10; 25:12, 19; 36:1 [v. 9 is an addition]; 37:2).

The Composition of the Book. For the literary sources of Genesis, see Introduction to the Pentateuch. As far as the sources of Genesis are concerned, contemporary readers can reasonably assume that ancient traditions (J and E) were edited in the sixth or fifth century B.C. for a Jewish audience that had suffered the effects of the exile and was now largely living outside of Palestine. The editor highlighted themes of vital concern to this audience: God intends that every nation have posterity and land; the ancestors of Israel are models for their descendants who also live in hope rather than in full possession of what has been promised; the ancient covenant with God is eternal, remaining valid even when the human party has been unfaithful. By highlighting such concerns, the editor addressed the worries of exiled Israel and indeed of contemporary Jews and Christians.

Genesis 1–11. The seven-day creation account in Gn 1:1–2:3 tells of a God whose mere word creates a beautiful universe in which human beings are an integral and important part. Though Gn 2:4–3:24 is often regarded as "the second creation story," the text suggests that the whole of 2:4–11:9 tells one story. The plot of Gn 2–11 (creation, the flood, renewed creation) has been borrowed from creation-flood stories attested in Mesopotamian literature of the second and early first millennia. In the Mesopotamian creation-flood stories, the gods created the human race as slaves whose task it was to manage the universe for them—giving them food, clothing, and honor in temple ceremonies. In an unforeseen development, however, the human race

grew so numerous and noisy that the gods could not sleep. Deeply angered, the gods decided to destroy the race by a universal flood. One man and his family, however, secretly warned of the flood by his patron god, built a boat and survived. Soon regretting their impetuous decision, the gods created a revised version of humankind. The new race was created mortal so they would never again grow numerous and bother the gods. The authors of Genesis adapted the creation-flood story in accord with their views of God and humanity. For example, they attributed the fault to human sin rather than to divine miscalculation (6:5–7) and had God reaffirm without change the original creation (9:1–7). In the biblical version God is just, powerful, and not needy.

How should modern readers interpret the creation-flood story in Gn 2–11? The stories are neither history nor myth. "Myth" is an unsuitable term, for it has several different meanings and connotes untruth in popular English. "History" is equally misleading, for it suggests that the events actually took place. The best term is creation-flood story. Ancient Near Eastern thinkers did not have our methods of exploring serious questions. Instead, they used narratives for issues that we would call philosophical and theological. They added and subtracted narrative details and varied the plot as they sought meaning in the ancient stories. Their stories reveal a privileged time, when divine decisions were made that determined the future of the human race. The origin of something was thought to explain its present meaning, e.g., how God acts with justice and generosity, why human beings are rebellious, the nature of sexual attraction and marriage, why there are many peoples and languages. Though the stories may initially strike us as primitive and naive, they are in fact told with skill, compression, and subtlety. They provide profound answers to perennial questions about God and human beings.

Genesis 11–50. One Jewish tradition suggests that God, having been rebuffed in the attempt to forge a relationship with the nations, decided to concentrate on one nation in the hope that it would eventually bring in all the nations. The migration of Abraham's family (11:26–31) is part of the general movement of the human race to take possession of their lands (see 10:32–11:9). Abraham, however, must come into possession of his land in a manner different from the nations, for he will not immediately possess it nor will he have descendants in the manner of the nations, for he is old and his wife is childless (12:1–9). Abraham and Sarah have to live with their God in trust and obedience until at last Isaac is born to them and they manage to buy a sliver of the land (the burial cave at Machpelah, chap. 23). Abraham's humanity and faith offer a wonderful example to the exilic generation.

The historicity of the ancestral stories has been much

discussed. Scholars have traditionally dated them sometime in the first half of the second millennium, though a few regard them as late (sixth or fifth century B.C.) and purely fictional. There is unfortunately no direct extrabiblical evidence confirming (or disproving) the stories. The ancestral stories have affinities, however, to late second-millennium stories of childless ancestors, and their proper names fit linguistic patterns attested in the second millennium. Given the lack of decisive evidence, it is reasonable to accept the Bible's own chronology that the patriarchs were the ancestors of Israel and that they lived well before the exodus that is generally dated in the thirteenth century.

Gn 25:19—35:43 are about Jacob and his twelve sons. The stories are united by a geographical frame: Jacob lives in Canaan until his theft of the right of the firstborn from his brother Esau forces him to flee to Paddan-Aram (alternately Aram-Naharaim). There his uncle Laban tricks him as he earlier tricked his brother. But Jacob is blessed with wealth and sons. He returns to Canaan to receive the final blessing, land, and on the way is reconciled with his brother Esau. As the sons have reached the number of twelve, the patriarch can be given the name Israel (32:28; 35:10). The blessings given to Abraham are reaffirmed to Isaac and to Jacob.

The last cycle of ancestor stories is about Jacob's son Joseph (37:1—50:26, though in chaps. 48–49 the focus swings back to Jacob). The Joseph stories are sophisticated in theme, deftly plotted, and show keen interest in the psychology of the characters. Jacob's favoring of Joseph, the son of his beloved wife Rachel, provokes his brothers to kill him. Joseph escapes death through the intercession of Reuben, the eldest, and of Judah, but is sold into slavery in Egypt. In the immediately following chap. 38, Judah undergoes experiences similar to Joseph's. Joseph, endowed by God with wisdom, becomes second only to Pharaoh in Egypt. From that pow-

erful position, he encounters his unsuspecting brothers who have come to Egypt because of the famine, and tests them to see if they have repented. Joseph learns that they have given up their hatred because of their love for Israel, their father. Judah, who seems to have inherited the mantle of the failed oldest brother Reuben, expresses the brothers' new and profound appreciation of their father and Joseph (chap. 44). At the end of Genesis, the entire family of Jacob/Israel is in Egypt, which prepares for the events in the Book of Exodus.

Genesis in Later Biblical Books. The historical and prophetic books constantly refer to the covenant with the ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Hos 10 sees the traits of Jacob in the behavior of the Israel of his own day. Is 51:2 cites Abraham and Sarah as a model for his dispirited community, for though only a couple, they became a great nation. Jn 1, "In the beginning was the word," alludes to Gn 1:1 (and Prv 8:22) to show that Jesus is creating a new world. St. Paul interprets Jesus as the New Adam in Rom 5:14 and 1 Cor 15:22, 24, whose obedience brings life just as the Old Adam's disobedience brought death. In Rom 4, Paul cites Abraham as someone who was righteous in God's eyes centuries before the Law was given at Sinai.

Outline of Genesis

- Preamble: The Creation of the World (1:1—2:3).
- The Story of the Nations (2:4—11:26).
 - The Creation of the Man and the Woman, Their Offspring, and the Spread of Civilization (2:4—4:26).
 - The Pre-flood Generations (5:1—6:8).
 - The Flood and the Renewed Blessing (6:9—9:29).
 - The Populating of the World and the Proudful City (10:1—11:9).
 - The Genealogy from Shem to Terah (11:10—26).
- The Story of the Ancestors of Israel (11:27—50:26).
 - The Story of Abraham and Sarah (11:27—25:18).
 - The Story of Isaac and Jacob (25:19—36:43).
 - The Story of Joseph (37:1—50:26).



Displays of awesome cosmic power, tender love stories, tearful family reunions, and tales of deceit, rape, murder, and worldwide destruction. Does this sound like the script for next summer's blockbuster movie? No, it's the Book of Genesis! It is the story of how a world created for love and harmony goes astray because of human sin. Through it all, God is at work, forming a people to restore what was lost.

In Depth

Genesis gathers together inspired stories and traditions that reveal Israel's understanding of God's nature and purpose, and the beginning of the Israelites' special relationship with God. Genesis has two main sections. The first section (1:1—11:26) contains some of the Bible's most memorable stories about Creation and the effect of sin. Chapters 1–2 tell two accounts of Creation that portray the beauty and wonder of the natural world and emphasize the goodness and harmony that God intended in Creation. Creation culminates in human beings, made in God's own image. Those human beings, symbolic of us all, live in a wonderful garden in harmony with God, Creation, and each other. But in chapter 3, sin enters the world, and as a result, Adam and Eve will experience separation, suffering, and ultimately death.

At a Glance

- Preamble. The Creation of the World (1:1—2:3).**
- I. **The Story of the Nations (2:4—11:26).**
 - A. **The Creation of the Man and the Woman, Their Offspring, and the Spread of Civilization (2:4—4:26).**
 - B. **The Pre-flood Generations (5:1—6:8).**
 - C. **The Flood and the Renewed Blessing (6:9—9:29).**
 - D. **The Populating of the World and the Proudful City (10:1—11:9).**
 - E. **The Genealogy from Shem to Terah (11:10—26).**
 - II. **The Story of the Ancestors of Israel (11:27—50:26).**
 - A. **The Story of Abraham and Sarah (11:27—25:18).**
 - B. **The Story of Isaac and Jacob (25:19—36:43).**
 - C. **The Story of Joseph (37:1—50:26).**

Quick Facts

Period Covered: The stories in the first eleven chapters are primeval history. Genesis 11:27—50:26 covers the period of the ancestors or patriarchs.

Themes: the goodness of Creation, human responsibility, the effects of sin, covenant, God's bringing good out of evil

And the first sin spreads, first to the family (Cain and Abel in chapter 4), then to all society (Noah and the Flood in chapters 6–9). Even after the Flood and God's covenant with Noah, the story of the tower of Babel demonstrates that sin pits nation against nation. As you read these chapters, remember that they were written not as historical accounts or scientific explanations but as inspired stories that share a faith perspective and teach important religious truths.

The second section of Genesis (11:27—50:26) tells the story of the origins of the Israelite people. The story begins with Abraham and Sarah (originally called Abram and Sarai) and continues with Ishmael and Isaac and with Isaac and Rebekah's children, Esau and Jacob. Genesis ends with Joseph, one of Jacob's twelve sons, cleverly saving Egypt and Israel from famine. These sections introduce the covenant God makes with Abraham and the Israelite people and remind the reader that God's plans will overcome human sin and weakness.



1:1—2:4

Genesis

Preamble. The Creation of the World

The Story of Creation†

1¹In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth*—²† and the earth was without form or shape, with darkness over the abyss and a mighty wind sweeping over the waters—*

³Then God said: Let there be light, and there was light.*⁴ God saw that the light was good. God then separated the light from the darkness.⁵ God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called

“night.” Evening came, and morning followed—the first day.†

⁶Then God said: Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters, to separate one body of water from the other.⁷ God made the dome,† and it separated the water below the dome from the water above the dome. And so it happened.*⁸ God called the dome “sky.” Evening came, and morning followed—the second day.

⁹Then God said: Let the water under the sky be gathered into a single basin, so that the dry land may appear. And so it happened: the water under the sky was gathered into its basin, and the dry land appeared.*¹⁰ God called the dry land

† **1:1–2:3** This section, from the Priestly source, functions as an introduction, as ancient stories of the origin of the world (cosmogonies) often did. It introduces the primordial story (2:4–11:26), the stories of the ancestors (11:27–50:26), and indeed the whole Pentateuch. The chapter highlights the goodness of creation and the divine desire that human beings share in that goodness. God brings an orderly universe out of primordial chaos merely by uttering a word. In the literary structure of six days, the creation events in the first three days are related to those in the second three.

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| 1. light (day)/darkness (night) | = | 4. sun/moon |
| 2. arrangement of water | = | 5. fish + birds from waters |
| 3. a) dry land | = | 6. a) animals |
| b) vegetation | = | b) human beings: male/female |

The seventh day, on which God rests, the climax of the account, falls outside the six-day structure.

Until modern times the first line was always translated, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Several comparable ancient cosmogonies, discovered in recent times, have a “when . . . then” construction, confirming the translation “when . . . then” here as well. “When” introduces the pre-creation state and “then” introduces the creative act affecting that state. The traditional translation, “In the beginning,” does not reflect the Hebrew syntax of the clause.

1:2 This verse is parenthetical, describing in three phases the pre-creation state symbolized by the chaos out of which God brings order: “earth,” hidden beneath the encompassing cosmic waters, could not

be seen, and thus had no “form”; there was only darkness; turbulent wind swept over the waters. Commencing with the last-named elements (darkness and water), vv. 3–10 describe the rearrangement of this chaos: light is made (first day) and the water is divided into water above and water below the earth so that the earth appears and is no longer “without outline.” *The abyss*: the primordial ocean according to the ancient Semitic cosmogony. After God’s creative activity, part of this vast body forms the salt-water seas (vv. 9–10); part of it is the fresh water under the earth (Ps 33:7; Ez 31:4), which wells forth on the earth as springs and fountains (Gn 7:11; 8:2; Prv 3:20). Part of it, “the upper water” (Ps 148:4; Dn 3:60), is held up by the dome of the sky (vv. 6–7), from which rain descends on the earth (Gn 7:11; 2 Kgs 7:2, 19; Ps 104:13). *A mighty wind*: literally, “spirit or breath [*ruah*] of God”; cf. Gn 8:1.

1:5 In ancient Israel a day was considered to begin at sunset.

1:7 *The dome*: the Hebrew word suggests a gigantic metal dome. It was inserted into the middle of the single body of water to form dry space within which the earth could emerge. The Latin Vulgate translation *firmamentum*, “means of support (for the upper waters); firmament,” provided the traditional English rendering.

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|--|--|
| 1:1 Gn 2:1, 4; 2 Mc 7:28; Ps 8:4; 33:6; 89:12; 90:2; Wis 11:17; Sir 16:24; Jer 10:12; Acts 14:15; Col 1:16–17; Heb 1:2–3; | 3:4 ; 11:3; Rev 4:11. |
| 1:2 Jer 4:23. | 1:3 2 Cor 4:6. |
| 1:7 Prv 8:27–28; 2 Pt 3:5. | 1:9 Jb 38:8; Ps 33:7; Jer 5:22. |

“earth,” and the basin of water he called “sea.” God saw that it was good. ¹¹* Then God said: Let the earth bring forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it. And so it happened: ¹²the earth brought forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree that bears fruit with its seed in it. God saw that it was good. ¹³Evening came, and morning followed—the third day.

¹⁴Then God said: Let there be lights in the dome of the sky, to separate day from night. Let them mark the seasons, the days and the years.* ¹⁵and serve as lights in the dome of the sky, to illuminate the earth. And so it happened: ¹⁶God made the two great lights, the greater one

to govern the day, and the lesser one to govern the night, and the stars.* ¹⁷God set them in the dome of the sky, to illuminate the earth, ¹⁸to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. God saw that it was good. ¹⁹Evening came, and morning followed—the fourth day.

²⁰* Then God said: Let the water teem with an abundance of living creatures, and on the earth let birds fly beneath the dome of the sky. ²¹God created the great sea monsters and all kinds of crawling living creatures with which the water teems, and all kinds of winged birds. God saw that it was good, ²²and God blessed them, saying: Be fertile, multiply, and fill the water of the seas; and let the birds multiply on the earth.*

1:11 Ps 104:14.
1:14 Jb 26:10; Ps 19:2-3; Bar 3:33.

1:16 Dt 4:19; Ps 136:7-9;
Wis 13:2-4; Jer 31:35.
1:20 Jb 12:7-10.
1:22 Gn 8:17.

In The Beginning

“**I**n the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth . . .” (Gn 1:1).

This simple verse is one of the foundational beliefs of Christianity. We are not a random collection of atoms. The world is not a lucky combination of cosmic circumstances. The universe did not just accidentally happen.

The beginning of wisdom is acknowledging that a higher power is at work in our lives, that the universe has purpose, and that everything was created by God. The ancient writers and editors of Genesis expressed these ideas in the Creation stories. The Church affirms these beliefs. They are expressed in a prayer called the Apostles’ Creed, which begins, “I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.”

Genesis expresses another foundational belief: God created everything good! Read the story in chapter 1, and see how this belief is constantly repeated: And humankind is “very good,” created in God’s own image. This is God’s message to you in the first chapter of the Bible: You carry God’s image within you. You are very good! Don’t let anyone try to convince you otherwise.

► Gn 1:1—2:4



Did You Know?

Literary Genres

Some Christians believe that God actually created the world in seven twenty-four-hour days. Such a belief comes from a literal reading of the first chapter of Genesis, as though it were a scientific textbook. However, Genesis was written not as a science article but as a series of symbolic stories, sometimes called mythic stories, that convey great moral and spiritual truths. We should not try to come to any scientific conclusions about the creation of the world from reading these stories.

Mythic stories are one literary type, or genre. You just have to look in a newspaper to see examples of different literary genres: news stories, advice columns, editorials, and comics. Each genre has different rules for interpreting its meaning. The Bible also contains many types of literary genres, including hero stories, poetry, laws, legends, fictional satire, debates, and letters. To properly understand the Bible, pay attention to the literary genre—otherwise, you might believe the Bible is saying something God doesn’t intend.

► Gn 1:1—2:4



Catholic Social Teaching

Coworkers with God

GN

In the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis, we read the wonderful story of God's creation of the universe. With each new day, God creates the light and darkness, the earth and sea, the plants and animals, and ultimately humankind. On the seventh day, God observes the amazing creation and we read, "God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good" (Gn 1:31).

After God creates the man and woman, he commands them to "fill the earth and subdue it" (Gn 1:28). In other words, human beings are to cooperate with God in the completion and care of creation. With God's grace, we participate in laying the foundation for God's reign on earth.

Catholic social teaching tells

us that as coworkers with God in caring for and sustaining the world, we have a responsibility to protect both the dignity of the human person as well as the planet. Amazing breakthroughs are happening in our world all the time, and yet, as Christians, we are asked to consider whether such developments are in keeping with the teachings of our Church. For example, we now have the ability to clone animals and genetically alter agricultural products, but will these practices sustain our world or ultimately destroy it? Do these practices really revere and value human life and the created order?

God has given us the amazing gift of intellectual inquiry, which can lead to wonderful advance-

ments for our world, but we must always ask ourselves how we might help promote ethical approaches to research so that future generations may continue to enjoy the beauty of creation and thrive in the universe.

- As a coworker with God, how do I sustain and care for God's creation?
- How might I use my gifts of knowledge and education to really improve the world and help bring about God's reign on earth?

▶ Genesis, chapters 1-2 Caring for God's Creation



²³ Evening came, and morning followed—the fifth day.

²⁴ * Then God said: Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature: tame animals, crawling things, and every kind of wild animal. And so it happened: ²⁵ God made every kind of wild animal, every kind of tame animal, and every kind of thing that crawls on the ground. God saw that it was good. ²⁶ * Then God said: Let us make† human beings in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds

of the air, the tame animals, all the wild animals, and all the creatures that crawl on the earth.

²⁷ God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female† he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and God said to them: Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. † Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that crawl on

† **1:26** *Let us make:* in the ancient Near East, and sometimes in the Bible, God was imagined as presiding over an assembly of heavenly beings who deliberated and decided about matters on earth (1 Kgs 22:19–22; Is 6:8; Ps 29:1–2; 82; 89:6–7; Jb 1:6; 2:1; 38:7). This scene accounts for the plural form here and in Gn 11:7 ("Let us then go down . . ."). Israel's God was always considered "Most High" over the heavenly beings. *Human beings:* Hebrew 'ādām is here the generic term for humankind; in the first five chapters of Genesis it is the proper name Adam only at 4:25 and 5:1–5. *In our image, after our likeness:* "image" and "likeness" (virtually synonyms) express the worth of human beings who have value in themselves (human blood may not be shed in 9:6 because of this image of God) and in their task, dominion (1:28), which promotes the rule of God over the universe.

1:27 *Male and female:* as God provided the plants with seeds (vv. 11, 12) and commanded the animals to be fertile and multiply (v. 22), so God gives sexuality to human beings as their means to continue in existence.

1:28 *Fill the earth and subdue it:* the object of the verb "subdue" may be not the earth as such but earth as the territory each nation

must take for itself (chaps. 10–11), just as Israel will later do (see Nm 32:22, 29; Jos 18:1). The two divine commands define the basic tasks of the human race—to continue in existence through generation and to take possession of one's God-given territory. The dual command would have had special meaning when Israel was in exile and deeply anxious about whether they would continue as a nation and return to their ancient territory. *Have dominion:* the whole human race is made in the "image" and "likeness" of God and has "dominion." Comparable literature of the time used these words of kings rather than of human beings in general; human beings were invariably thought of as slaves of the gods created to provide menial service for the divine world. The royal language here does not, however, give human beings unlimited power, for kings in the Bible had limited dominion and were subject to prophetic critique.

1:24 Sir 16:27–28.

1:26–27 Gn 5:1, 3; 9:6; Ps

8:5–6; Wis 2:23; 10:2;

Sir 17:1, 3–4; Mt 19:4;

Mk 10:6; Jas 3:7; Eph

4:24; Col 3:10

1:28 Gn 8:17; 9:1; Ps 8:6–9;

115:16; Wis 9:2.



Cultural Connection

God Is Our Creator

According to Genesis, chapters 1–2, God created the universe and is the source of order in all creation. Creation is good, and its goodness is reflected in the harmony, peace, and love between the Creator and his creatures, and among the creatures themselves. In Hispanic theological traditions, this ideal relationship—symbolized by the way God and Adam and Eve relate in the Garden of Eden—is considered the foundation in which salvation history is rooted.

- How are your relationships with God, your friends, your family, and nature characterized by harmony, peace, and love?
- Reflect on how you can improve some of your strained

relationships, and ask God's help to do it.

Human beings are created in God's image and likeness and share God's attributes: freedom, love, knowledge, and the ability to create. With these gifts comes the responsibility of caring for all creation.

- Give thanks and praise to God for creation, especially for your own life and the lives of the people around you.
- Think of how you, your family, and your community can take better care of all creation. Pray that you fully develop your capacity to love, to know the truth, and to use your freedom wisely.

God established a covenant with us at the moment of our creation, and we keep this covenant by freely placing ourselves in God's hands and being responsive to God's invitation to live in communion with God and people.

- How do you use your freedom to respond to God's invitation?
- Think about the aspects of your life for which you most need God's wisdom to live in harmony and love. Put yourself in God's hands, and let God help and direct you.

► Genesis, chapters 1–2



the earth.* ²⁹ † * God also said: See, I give you every seed-bearing plant on all the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food; ³⁰ and to all the wild animals, all the birds of the air, and all the living creatures that crawl on the earth, I give all the green plants for food. And so it happened. ³¹ God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good. Evening came, and morning followed—the sixth day.*

2 ¹ Thus the heavens and the earth and all their array were completed.* ² † On the seventh

day God completed the work he had been doing; he rested on the seventh day from all the work he had undertaken.* ³ God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work he had done in creation.*

I. The Story of the Nations

The Garden of Eden

⁴ This is the story† of the heavens and the earth at their creation. When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens— ⁵ there was no field

older traditions, belonging to the tradition called Yahwist, and gives them a new setting. In the first part of Genesis, the formula “this is the story” (or a similar phrase) occurs five times (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10), which corresponds to the five occurrences of the formula in the second part of the book (11:27; 25:12, 19; 36:19; 37:2). Some interpret the formula here as retrospective (“Such is the story”), referring back to chap. 1, but all its other occurrences introduce rather than summarize. It is introductory here; the Priestly source would hardly use the formula to introduce its own material in chap. 1.

The cosmogony that begins in v. 4 is concerned with the nature of human beings, narrating the story of the essential institutions and limits of the human race through their first ancestors. This cosmogony, like 1:1–3 (see note there), uses the “when . . . then” construction

^{1:29} According to the Priestly tradition, the human race was originally intended to live on plants and fruits as were the animals (see v. 30), an arrangement that God will later change (9:3) in view of the human inclination to violence.

^{2:2} The mention of the seventh day, repeated in v. 3, is outside the series of six days and is thus the climax of the account. The focus of the account is God. The text does not actually institute the practice of keeping the Sabbath, for it would have been anachronistic to establish at this point a custom that was distinctively Israelite (Ex 31:13, 16, 17), but it lays the foundation for the later practice. Similarly, ancient creation accounts often ended with the construction of a temple where the newly created human race provided service to the gods who created them, but no temple is mentioned in this account. As was the case with the Sabbath, it would have been anachronistic to institute the temple at this point, for Israel did not yet exist. In Ex 25–31 and 35–40, Israel builds the tabernacle, which is the precursor of the Temple of Solomon.

^{2:4} *This is the story*: the distinctive Priestly formula introduces

^{1:29–30} Gn 9:3; Ps 104:14–15.
^{1:31} 1 Tm 4:4.
^{2:1} Is 45:12; Jn 1:3.

^{2:2} Ex 20:9–11; 31:17; Heb 4:4, 10.
^{2:3} Ex 20:11; Dt 5:14; Neh 9:14.

shrub on earth and no grass of the field had sprouted, for the LORD God had sent no rain upon the earth and there was no man† to till the ground, ⁶but a stream† was welling up out of the earth and watering all the surface of the ground— ⁷then the LORD God formed the man†

† common in ancient cosmogonies. The account is generally attributed to the Yahwist, who prefers the divine name “Yhwh” (here rendered LORD) for God. God in this story is called “the LORD God” (except in 3:1–5); “LORD” is to be expected in a Yahwist account but the additional word “God” is puzzling.

2:5 *Man*: the Hebrew word *‘adam* is a generic term meaning “human being.” In chaps. 2–3, however, the archetypal human being is understood to be male (Adam), so the word *‘adam* is translated “man” here.

2:6 *Stream*: the water wells up from the vast flood below the earth. The account seems to presuppose that only the garden of God was irrigated at this point. From this one source of all the fertilizing water on the earth, water will be channeled through the garden of God over the entire earth. It is the source of the four rivers mentioned in vv. 10–14. Later, with rain and cultivation, the fertility of the garden of God will appear in all parts of the world.

2:7 God is portrayed as a potter molding the human body out of earth. There is a play on words in Hebrew between *‘adam* (“human being,” “man”) and *‘adama* (“ground”). It is not enough to make the body from earth; God must also breathe into the man’s nostrils. A similar picture of divine breath imparted to human beings in order for them to live is found in Ez 37:5, 9–10; Jn 20:22. The Israelites did not think in the (Greek) categories of body and soul.

2:8 *Eden, in the east*: the place names in vv. 8–14 are mostly derived from Mesopotamian geography (see note on vv. 10–14). Eden may be the name of a region in southern Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), the term derived from the Sumerian word *eden*, “fertile plain.” A similar-sounding Hebrew word means “delight,” which may lie behind the Greek translation, “The Lord God planted a paradise [= pleasure park] in Eden.” It should be noted, however, that the

out of the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.*

⁸The LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east,† and placed there the man whom he had formed.* ⁹† Out of the ground the LORD

garden was not intended as a paradise for the human race, but as a pleasure park for God; the man tended it for God. The story is not about “paradise lost.”

The garden in the precincts of Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem seems to symbolize the garden of God (like gardens in other temples); it is apparently alluded to in Ps 1:3; 80:10; 92:14; Ez 47:7–12; Rev 22:1–2.

2:9 The second tree, the tree of life, is mentioned here and at the end of the story (3:22, 24). It is identified with Wisdom in Prv 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4, where the pursuit of wisdom gives back to human beings the life that is made inaccessible to them in Gn 3:24. In

2:7 Gn 3:19; 18:27; Tb 8:6;
Jb 34:15; Ps 103:14;
104:29; Eccl 3:20; 12:7;

Wis 7:1; Sir 33:10;
1 Cor 15:45.
2:8 Is 51:3; Ez 31:9.

Pray It!

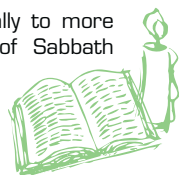
The Sabbath

Even God needed to take a rest. The writer of Genesis makes this point to remind readers to set aside a day for rest and prayer, which Jewish people call the Sabbath. Honoring the Sabbath is an act of trust in God. It means we believe that the world will not fall apart if we stop our activity. The world is in God’s hands. We can hear this truth echoed in Jesus’ words:

Notice how the flowers grow. They do not toil or spin. But I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of them. If God so clothes the grass in the field that grows today and is thrown into the oven tomorrow, will he not much more provide for you, O you of little faith? (Lk 12:27–28)

Traditionally, Christians rest and pray on Sunday because it is the day on which Jesus was resurrected. In our culture today, it seems that many people are losing this practice.

- What could we gain if we recommitted ourselves to a day of rest, celebration, and prayer?
- What can you do personally to more fully honor the concept of Sabbath rest?



▶ Gn 2:1–3

Live It!

In God’s Image

God does not make mistakes; people do. Some people might be tempted to deny their racial heritage, even to change their physical appearance in order to conform to the latest fad or fit the dominant cultural image of beauty. We must remember that physical features are not accidents. God planned for them—we are all made in God’s image, inside and out.

If we are to authentically love ourselves, we must love our whole selves. This includes a love for dark skin or light skin, straight hair or curly hair, wide nose or pug nose, and all the variations in between. Whatever our appearance, we are all blessed by God.

▶ Gn 1:26–27





Original Sin

Before the Fall, Adam and Eve had it all. God gave them freedom and established a close friendship with them. They could simply walk about the garden tending to it alongside of God. They lived in perfect harmony with each other and all of creation without fear, suffering, or death. Yet, Adam and Eve wanted more. By believing the serpent's lie, Adam and Eve sought to make themselves equal to God. They distrusted God's goodness, directly disobeyed God, and abused the freedom God had given them. The results were tragic. Adam and Eve's friendship with God turned into fear as they hid in the garden. After being expelled from the garden, tension and strife entered Adam and Eve's once harmonious relationship. The creation they once helped tend with God became hazardous and difficult to manage. Ultimately, through their sin, death became a reality for Adam and Eve. Though this account in chapter three of Genesis uses figurative language, it points to the reality that all of humanity has been affected by the sin our first parents freely chose to commit.

This original sin and its consequences have been handed down to every generation throughout all of history, with the exception of Jesus and his mother, Mary. Although we are not personally responsible for it, our nature also has been wounded by this sin. As a result, we do not have the original holiness and justice God intended for us, but are inclined to sin and subject to death. Fortunately, Jesus Christ, unlike Adam and Eve, came in total obedience to the will of God. As a result, the sin brought into the world by Adam and Eve has been overcome by the Passion, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. (Read Romans 5:12–21 to learn more about the relationship between Adam and Jesus.) Through the grace of the sacrament of Baptism, we are freed from original sin and turned back toward God. And the graces we receive through Christ will surpass those that Adam and Eve ever knew before the Fall!

► **Gn 3:1–24**

Catechism, nos. 369–421



God made grow every tree that was delightful to look at and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*

¹⁰A river rises in Eden† to water the garden; beyond there it divides and becomes four branches. ¹¹The name of the first is the Pishon; it is the one that winds through the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹²The gold of that land is good; bdellium and lapis lazuli are also there. ¹³The name of the second river is the Gihon; it is the one that winds all through the land of Cush.* ¹⁴The name of the third river is the Tigris; it is the one that flows east of Asshur. The fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵The LORD God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it.* ¹⁶The LORD God gave the man this order: You are free to eat from any of the trees of the garden* ¹⁷except the tree of knowledge of good and evil. From that tree you shall not eat; when you eat from it you shall die.†*

¹⁸The LORD God said: It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suited to him.†* ¹⁹So the LORD God formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the air, and he brought them to the man to see what he would call them; whatever the man called each living creature was then its name. ²⁰The man gave names to all the tame animals, all the birds of the air, and all the wild animals; but none proved to be a helper suited to the man.

²¹So the LORD God cast a deep sleep on the man, and while he was asleep, he took out one of

his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.* ²²The LORD God then built the rib that he had taken from the man into a woman. When he brought her to the man, ²³the man said:

"This one, at last, is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;

This one shall be called 'woman,'
for out of man this one has been taken."†

²⁴* That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body.†

²⁵The man and his wife were both naked, yet they felt no shame.†

Expulsion from Eden

3¹Now the snake was the most cunning† of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He asked the woman, "Did God really say, 'You shall not eat from any of the trees in the garden?'" ²The woman answered the snake: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; ³* it is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, 'You shall not eat it or even touch it, or else you will die.'" ⁴But the snake said to the woman: "You certainly will not die!* ⁵God knows well that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, who know† good and evil." ⁶The woman saw that the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eyes, and the tree was desirable for gaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband, who was

† the new creation described in the Book of Revelation, the tree of life is once again made available to human beings (Rev 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19). *Knowledge of good and evil*: the meaning is disputed. According to some, it signifies moral autonomy, control over morality (symbolized by "good and evil"), which would be inappropriate for mere human beings; the phrase would thus mean refusal to accept the human condition and finite freedom that God gives them. According to others, it is more broadly the knowledge of what is helpful and harmful to humankind, suggesting that the attainment of adult experience and responsibility inevitably means the loss of a life of simple subordination to God.

2:10-14 *A river rises in Eden*: the stream of water mentioned in v. 6, the source of all water upon earth, comes to the surface in the garden of God and from there flows out over the entire earth. In comparable religious literature, the dwelling of god is the source of fertilizing waters. The four rivers represent universality, as in the phrase "the four quarters of the earth." In Ez 47:1-12; Zec 14:8; Rev 22:1-2, the waters that irrigate the earth arise in the temple or city of God. The place names in vv. 11-14 are mainly from southern Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), where Mesopotamian literature placed the original garden of God. The Tigris and the Euphrates, the two great rivers in that part of the world, both emptied into the Persian Gulf. Gihon is the modest stream issuing from Jerusalem (2 Sm 5:8; 1 Kgs 1:9-10; 2 Chr 32:4), but is here regarded as one of the four great world rivers and linked to Mesopotamia, for Cush here seems to be the territory of the Kassites (a people of Mesopotamia) as in Gn 10:8. The word Pishon is otherwise unknown but is probably formed in imitation of Gihon. Havilah seems, according to Gn 10:7 and 1 Chr 1:9, to be in Cush in southern Mesopotamia though other locations have been suggested.

2:17 *You shall die*: since they do not die as soon as they eat from the forbidden tree, the meaning seems to be that human beings have become mortal, destined to die by virtue of being human.

2:18 *Helper suited to him*: lit., "a helper in accord with him." "Helper" need not imply subordination, for God is called a helper (Dt 33:7; Ps 46:2). The language suggests a profound affinity between the man and the woman and a relationship that is supportive and nurturing.

2:23 The man recognizes an affinity with the woman God has brought him. Unlike the animals who were made from the ground, she is made from his very self. There is a play on the similar-sounding Hebrew words 'ishsha ("woman," "wife") and 'ish ("man," "husband").

2:24 *One body*: lit., "one flesh." The covenant of marriage establishes kinship bonds of the first rank between the partners.

2:25 *They felt no shame*: marks a new stage in the drama, for the reader knows that only young children know no shame. This draws the reader into the next episode, where the couple's disobedience results in their loss of innocence.

3:1 *Cunning*: there is a play on the words for "naked" (2:25) and "cunning/wise" (Heb. 'arum). The couple seek to be "wise" but end up knowing that they are "naked."

3:5 *Like gods, who know*: or "like God who knows."

2:9 Gn 3:22; Prv 3:18; Rev 2:7; 22:2, 14.

2:13 Sir 24:25.

2:15 Sir 7:15.

2:16 Ps 104:14-15.

2:17 Gn 3:2-3; Rom 6:23.

2:18 Tb 8:6; Sir 36:24; 1 Cor 11:9; 1 Tm 2:13.

2:21 Sir 17:1; 1 Cor 11:8-9; 1 Tm 2:13.

2:24 Mt 19:5; Mk 10:7; 1 Cor 7:10-11; Eph 5:31.

3:3 Gn 2:17; Rom 6:23.

3:4-5 Wis 2:24; Sir 25:14; Is 14:14; Jn 8:44; 2 Cor 11:3.